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ART OF WOOD CARVING

ROGERS

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THE

RT OF WOOD-CARVING.

Practical Hints to Amateurs.

WITH TWENTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY

GEORGE ALFRED ROGERS,

Artist in Wood to the Queen, and Professor of the Crystal Palace Schools of Art;
Author of "Some Account of the Wood-Carvings of St. Michael's Church, Cornhill," and "Full-size Designs for Wood-Carving."

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"So much the more our carver's excellence."—*Winter's Tale.*

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DEDICATION.

G to dedicate this Work, with much respect, to those
es and Gentlemen whom I have had the honour of
ucting in my profession.

MADDOX STREET.

PREFACE.

It is my desire, in these few pages, to render what assistance I am able, to those numerous ladies and gentlemen who have made a study of my profession their amusement.

I cannot hope that this Work will be all that is needed, but such instruction as it is possible to give with only pen and ink will, I trust, be found within its pages.

With the exception of illuminating, and perhaps a few sister arts, wood sculpture or carving appears to be the most useful and entertaining recreation which has for some years been admitted into fashionable circles.

Many of my pupils have by their endeavours largely contributed to the success of fancy fairs for various charities in which they have been interested; others have decorated their tables with caskets and bookstands, and their walls with brackets and frames; and I must not omit the mention of one lady who has accomplished the remarkable task of carving all the oaken pew-heads or finials for her husband's church, with very little assistance from me, on

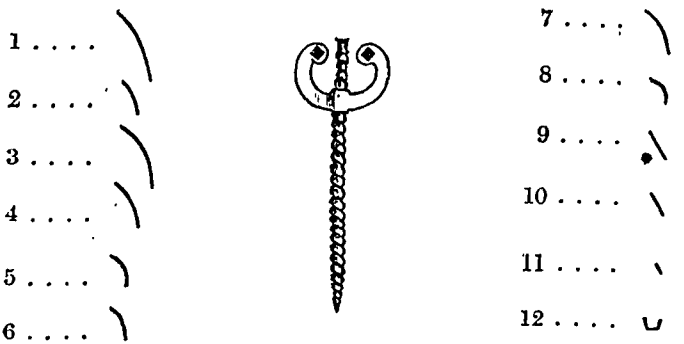
the actual blocks of wood, I merely supplying the designs and models, and carving one or two with her in softer material.

Again expressing a hope that this little Work will assist those who have commenced, and act as an inducement to others to try their skill, I beg to introduce the following pages.

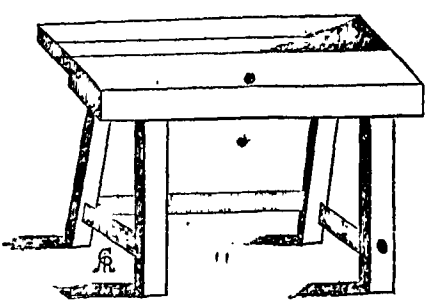
CONTENTS.

	Page
DEDICATION	iii
PREFACE	v
REQUISITES AND USEFUL ACCESSORIES	1
ON THE CHOICE OF WOODS	3
ON FIXING THE WORK	7
ON FIRST STEPS, AND CARVING IN RELIEF	9
ON FRETWORK AND PERFORATED CARVING	14
ON BOLD WORK	16
ON SHARPENING THE TOOLS, AND OTHER INFORMATION	18
ON STAINING, OILING, VARNISHING, AND POLISHING	21

PLATE I.



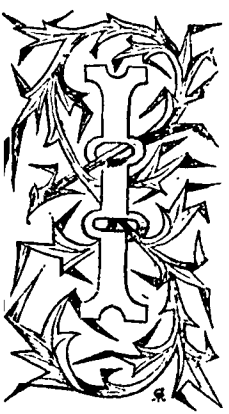
IMPRESSIONS OF TOOLS MENTIONED ON PAGE 2.



CARVER'S BENCH-SCREW AND WORK-TABLE.

PRACTICAL HINTS TO AMATEURS.

Requisites and Useful Accessories.



N commencing the study of wood-carving, it will be well to see that the necessary implements and materials are at our hand; I will therefore give in this section a list and description of the various items we shall require in the course of our work.

Firstly, we must have a bench or strong table for our operations; it need not be very large, but should be as firm as we can make it; if it is not of sufficient weight in itself to keep it steady, I recommend its being placed against a wall, or, if possible, fastened to it. This bench should have a hole about half an inch in diameter cut through the top, four inches from the front centre. The importance of having the work-table firm will be seen as soon as the amateur commences his work. A substitute for a bench, which answers tolerably well for light work, is to have the

carving fixed to a board, and that attached to an ordinary table by means of small iron cramps.

We shall require about ten or twelve tools, ground and sharpened to a fine edge. I give illustrations of the most useful of these instruments: their technical terms are as follows:

1. ⅝ flat hollow.
2. Quarter-inch flat hollow.
3. ⅝ gouge.
4. Half-inch gouge.
5. Quarter-inch gouge.
6. Gouge.
7. Gouge.
8. Berry tool.
9. A corner firmer.
10. A quarter-inch grounder.
11. A pick.
12. A maccaroni tool.

I cannot recommend the short-handled "ladies' tools," as they are termed, the best size for a carving tool being about five inches of handle, and four or four and a half o steel.

We shall also require a "carver's screw" for the bench a small mallet, and the wood to be carved, and we ar ready. The mallet is not always needed, but it is usefu in getting the unnecessary wood away when we are com mencing the work.

The above articles are absolutely necessary for carryin out our designs with success.

I will now give a further list of articles which, thoug they can be dispensed with, at any rate at first, are never theless important and useful additions to the carver's studi

A Bench-vice.—This vice is to be fixed at one corner of the work-table (the left side will be the most out of the way), and will be found very useful for holding the wood while being prepared for carving.

A bow-saw or a buhl-saw and horse: the former carries a coarse saw, and is used in a horizontal position, the wood being held in the vice. Both hands should grasp the longest handle, the operator standing right in front of his work. When the interior portions of the wood have to be sawn out with the bow-saw, a hole must be made with a gimlet, square awl, Archimedean drill, or other tool, and the stretcher at the top loosed, and one rivet holding the saw taken out; the saw is then put through the gimlet-hole, the rivet replaced, and the saw restretched. This saw is much more rapid in execution, but cannot do such fine work as the buhl-saw. A description of the manner of using this latter instrument will be found in the section on "Fretwork and Perforated Carving." Two or three small files and gimlets, a screw-driver, glue-pot, and compasses, a few more tools of various curves and bends, such as parting or V tools, bent gouge, firmers, veiners, corner gouges, &c., a pair of small handscrews, some glass-paper, and a stiff brush.

On the Choice of Woods.

It will facilitate the progress of the amateur materially if wood of a suitable nature be used to carry out his intention. With regard to this no laws can be laid down; a few instances, however, of woods which are specially applicable may be of service.

Thus lime-wood was almost exclusively used by Grinling Gibbons for all his magnificent drops and festoons of

fruit, flowers, and birds at Petworth, Chatsworth, Burghley, Belton, Melbury, Gatton, and the numerous other noble seats to which his genius has imparted such a charm.

Lime-tree is soft and pliable to the tool, and less liable to split and splinter than almost any other wood, which qualities render it of great utility to carvers for carrying out designs when lightness and boldness are equally required. It takes a stain well, and a fair polish, or it may be varnished without greatly altering the colour of the wood, but giving to it a very agreeable boxwood appearance. As well as for large festoons, it is suitable for smaller works, such as book-stands, miniature and portrait frames, &c.*

American walnut is a very good wood for amateurs, and is much in favour with them from its dark colour. It has, however, a more open grain than lime, and therefore requires more care to avoid accidents. It is used for many small works where much projection is unnecessary, as book-racks, letter-boxes, watch-stands, &c.

Sycamore, holly, and chestnut are amongst the lightest of our woods: the first is greatly, and, in fact, principally used for bread-plates and potato bowls and other articles, when a light tint is a consideration.

When the amateur has gained a certain proficiency in the art, harder woods may be worked without a great amount of additional exertion, as so much depends on the mode of propelling the implements.

I should then recommend oak, Italian and English

* Lime wood has been famous for purposes of sculpture from very ancient times, and is mentioned with praise by more than one classic poet. It is extensively grown in this country, though practically it must be reckoned a foreign tree, principally growing in the north and east of Europe, and in Lithuania, where there are enormous forests of it.

walnut. The former, from its hard and enduring nature, should as a rule be chosen for executing the finials or pew-heads, alms-boxes, church and Gothic works in general. It is also much used for clock and hall brackets, and for other pieces of solid furniture.* Italian walnut is a rich and beautiful wood for a variety of purposes, such as cabinets, panels, book-cases, frames, &c. It is hard, but the effect produced by its use amply repays the extra labour caused by the close texture of the material.

When any very delicate designs have to be executed, and the most minute finish is required, boxwood, ebony, or any other equally hard and close-grained woods are decidedly the best to choose.

Pear-tree is a pleasant wood for working, and a good piece resembles lime in its pliability, but it is harder, and of a darker tint. It is extensively used in France for the same purpose for which we employ lime.

Woods with ornamental grains, as bird's-eye maple, satin wood, yew, and laburnum, &c., are not the most desirable woods for carving purposes: the grain and colour often interfere with the effect we are endeavouring to produce. Thus one of the eyes of the maple might grace the nose of a Venus, or the white stains of yew or laburnum show like deep gashes across her otherwise beautiful face.

These are only general ideas, as there must be of necessity many exceptions to any rule for the selection of proper woods for particular subjects; for the choice of material must in all cases be subservient to the character of the design, as also to the taste of the operator.

To procure good wood for our purposes the trees should

* The wood principally used in the decorative carving of our cathedrals during the middle ages was the true British oak, or *Quercus robur*.

be felled at a proper time and age, and the wood should be thoroughly seasoned. The proper time to fell oaks and most other trees is when they fail to increase in size more than two feet per annum. If cut down before that period of their existence, the heart will not be fully developed, and will not be as hard as the other part. When oaks are about thirty years old their growth is most rapid. Autumn is generally considered the best time to fell.

If wood be used in an unseasoned state it is sure to warp and twist; and when it is so used for panels fitted into loose grooves, it shrinks away from the edge which happens to be the most slightly held; but when restrained by nails, mortises, or other unyielding attachments, which do not allow them the power of contraction, they split with irresistible force, and the material and the workmanship are thus brought to no useful service. It is, therefore, very necessary that the natural juices of the tree be got rid of by seasoning it before use. After a tree has been lopped, barked, and roughly squared, it is left some time exposed to the weather, and may be soaked in fresh running water with advantage, or boiled or steamed. Any of these processes tend to dilute and wash out the juices, and the water readily evaporates from the wood at a subsequent period, and the colour of the wood will be much improved by these means.

In this way fir timber, on its arrival at the port of London, is formed into rafts or floats on the Thames, and allowed to remain there for some time. When taken out it is left to dry thoroughly before its removal to the saw-pits. Thin planks, if properly exposed to the air, will be seasoned in about a year, but the thicker the wood the longer the time it will take. Oak loses nearly two-fifths of its weight in proper seasoning.

TABLE SHOWING THE VARIOUS PROPERTIES OF WOODS.

Elasticity.

Ash.
Hazel.
Hickory.
Lance Wood.
Sweet Chestnut.
Snake Wood.
Yew.

Toughness.

Beech.
Elm.
Lignum Vitæ.
Oak.
Walnut.

Evenness of Grain.

Lime.
Pear-tree.
Pine.

Handsome Figure.

Bird's-eye Maple.
Italian Walnut.
Yew.
Oak.
Mahogany.
Laburnum.
Tulip.
Satin Wood.

Durability.

Cedar.
Oak.
Poplar.
Sweet Chestnut.
Yellow Deal.

Colouring Matter.

RED.

Brazil.
Cane Wood.
Logwood.
Red Sanders.

GREEN.

Green Ebony.

YELLOW.

Fustic.
Zante.

Scent.

Camphor Wood.
Cedar.
Rosewood.
Sandal Wood.
Satin Wood.
Sassafras.

On Fixing the Work.

This is a more important operation than many amateurs seem to think. It is alike necessary for doing work well, and for doing it without accidents to either the work in hand or the fingers of the carver. I may here add that if the work be properly fixed, and tools held as hereinafter described, accidents are almost impossible. For many years I was able to boast that no amateur had ever

had an accident during the lessons at my studio, but the spell is now broken, for one lady has cut four of my fingers at one stroke. I apologise to her for mentioning the fact, for I believe it gave her more pain than it did to me.

There are very numerous methods of fixing the work on the bench or work-table, the best by far, and the most general, being the "carver's screw."

This useful instrument has at one end a pointed screw, and at the other a nut. The worm of the screw is turned square to give extra power. The way to use it is as follows: Bore a hole in the back of the wood required to be fixed with a gimlet or small tool. The nut of the screw is then taken off, and the point turned in to the gimlet-hole until it holds the wood firmly. The hole must not be bored too deeply, or it will interfere with the carving. The two square holes in the nut are to be used as keys, similar to bedscrews, for turning the carver's screw into the work.

This done, the nut end of the screw is to be put through the hole in the bench-top, and the nut screwed on underneath until all is made firm and secure.

The "carver's screw" has advantages over every other kind of fastening, inasmuch as it is all underneath the table, and no part of the fixing is in the way of the carver. Another advantage is, that the work can be turned with the greatest facility by merely loosening the nut, and can immediately be made firm again in another position.

As other means of fixture, two iron cramps are often used on either side of the work to hold it securely, but they are much in the way, and the carver feels cramped for room. They are, however, useful when the amateur is working on a table through which a hole cannot or may not be cut.

Holdfasts are used sometimes, but they require a large hole in the bench, and are only applicable to large and heavy work. The same objection of its being in the way applies to the holdfast; and, indeed, to all the other appliances which have been invented. There are exceptions to every rule, and it sometimes occurs that the "carver's screw" is not adapted to the work in hand, and some of the other means are obliged to be made use of; as, for instance, when a hole cannot be made in the work, and the work cannot be glued down on a board, and in the case of a chair leg, or banner-screen pole, in which cases the pole or leg is put into a long cramp, and the cramp placed on the bench. The carving will then turn round horizontally when needed. The cramp must be fixed firmly, which is generally done by two blocks of wood, with grooves cut to receive its two ends.

Small frames and other work are very often glued down on a common piece of deal during the operation of carving, and care must always be taken, when this plan is pursued, to glue a piece of paper between the wood to be carved and the deal, so that the two woods can be separated safely when the work is done. Unless this precaution be taken, the carving cannot be removed from the board without breaking. The paper splits when a dinner knife is pressed into the joints, and one-half of it will adhere to the carving, the other to the board.

On First Steps, and Carving in Relief.

In commencing operations I advise the choice of something simple, and that it should be carved in relief; thus a small paper-weight in lime wood would be easy and suitable for a first trial. (See Plate II.)

Procure a piece of lime about an inch or three-quarters

of an inch in thickness, and of the oval shape of the pattern. (The amateur can saw it out himself, if he thinks fit, with a bow or buhl-saw.) Now make a tracing of the design, and gum or paste it on the wood. The "carver's screw" is now to be fastened in the bottom of the wood, and to the bench, as described on page 8, taking care that the hole for the screw is in such a place that it will not protrude through the surface of the work. It is well to put it under the part where there will be the most projection, and not to force it in to too great a depth if the lime is not glued down on a piece of wood, in which case the screw can be put in anywhere.

The first thing now to do is the "grounding;" that is, cutting away all the wood, except where the leaves and stalks and berries are to be, to an even depth, leaving the design the full thickness of the wood. This is done by taking flat tool No. 2 on Plate I., and wherever it fits the outline of the leaves or stalks, hold it quite perpendicularly just outside the line, and propel it by gentle taps of the mallet. The tool must not point inwards, so as to undercut the leaves, on any account. If it is not held quite upright, the inclination had better be outwards than the reverse. Now take gouge No. 4, and when it fits, proceed in the same manner with the other gouges until the entire outline is incised. No. 2 tool must now be taken to cut away the wood outside the design to the depth of the incisions made, getting the ground all level and even with the aid of tools 10 and 11. The whole of this operation may have to be repeated two or three times, until the desired depth, and consequently the desired projection of design, is acquired. In the instance before us the ground should be sunk to a little more than half the thickness of the wood. It is well to draw a line round

the edge of the work to assist the eye in getting the level for the grounding.

Except when the mallet is being used, the tools should be held with *both hands*, the left hand grasping the tool a little below the middle, and the palm of the right hand at the top of the handle. The left wrist may rest on the work, or on the bench, for steadiness, and act as the support of the instrument, the right hand being the guide and propeller.

If attention be paid to this advice, and the tools be always held as described, accidents to the hands cannot possibly occur, from the sound reason that if the amateur have both his hands on the tools, he can have no other hand to cut.

We now come to the more interesting part of our occupation, that of the formation of the leaves and berries. One leaf is represented as being under the stalk, another over it, and the berries quite separate. It would be well to leave a part of each leaf to the full thickness of the wood, and break their horizontal as much as the taste of the operator dictates, so as to give to the surface a natural undulation. The stalk, as will be seen, must not be the same height all along, but should dip gracefully under and over the leaves. This part of the work is technically termed *bosting*.*

When the stalk and leaves have been bosted into the agreeable curves they assume in nature, the surface must be got as smooth as possible with the tools, and the outlines corrected (should they require it), and the whole slightly undercut, so that the thickness of the wood is not so apparent; but this is generally overdone by amateurs.

* There is no correctly-authorised word in English to denote this preparatory state of carving: it corresponds with what is familiarly understood by a *dead colour* in painting. The origin of this term was probably the Italian word *abbozzo*.

There is no necessity in most works for undercutting more than 60 degrees.

Supposing the surface of the leaves to have been carved as smoothly as the skill of the amateur will permit, the veining may be put in. It is best to draw the midrib or centre vein, and to carve that one first, and let it be raised, not an incised vein. Mark the two lines from the stalk, gradually converging together, until they quite meet at the top point of the leaf. Now take the maccaroni and cut away the wood on either side of the vein, tilting the instrument slightly towards the stalk, in order that no mark be made with the other corner of the tool. As this requires some little practice, it would be well to make acquaintance with this tool by trying it on a piece of waste wood. Those amateurs who have not this instrument—and many have not—should use the parting, or V, tool in the same manner as the maccaroni, but in this case a small flat tool must be used after it, to cut away the wood close to the vein. The maccaroni does not require this assistance as it is shaped to cut at both angles.

The side veins I should advise to be merely incised or engraved at present, until some proficiency is attained in handling the tools. This can be done with tool 12, the veining, or the parting tool.

The edge of the oval may now be rounded off with the flat tools. In doing this the amateur must be cautious that the grain does not carry his tool too far into the wood ; if it has a tendency to do so he may be pretty sure he is cutting the wrong way, and must try in the opposite direction. This will give the amateur some experience, and get him used to the grain of woods, as he will have to cut in four different directions to round this edge properly —namely, from the middle of the two sides to the two

ends. Now take some fine glass-paper (No. 0), and rub it lightly over the surface of the work, but be careful not to injure the leaves by destroying the sharpness of the edges, or it will look heavy, and present a clumsy appearance. This glass-papering must not be overdone; and if the carver can cut the leaves smooth enough to render glass-papering unnecessary, so much the better. After glass-papering, the work must be brushed with a dry brush. The carving of the paper-weight may now be considered finished, but more can be done to it if the carver wishes, —such as the ground being punched, the whole being stained, varnished, and polished (see section on this subject on page 21). A hole can be cut in the bottom for the reception of a piece of lead, and then covered with velvet, or it may be mounted on an oblong slab of ebony, or a larger oval of the same wood. If the amateur has succeeded tolerably well with this first trial, some other piece of a more difficult character and more elaborate design had better be attempted, such as the full-size designs I have published separately (see announcement at end), or as the design on Plate III. This is a small oblong panel, which, when finished, could be applied to a variety of uses, such as the front of a letter-box for the hall or study, the front of a small drawer, or one of the panels of a small cabinet; or, as it was originally designed and executed for her Majesty, in the form of a bookstand. These designs have to be enlarged to the size suitable to the object in view, or full-sized copies can be had of the author. I advise the amateur still to keep to lime, pear, or walnut wood until he has made some progress, and has got used to the handling of the instruments.

When the full-sized drawing is made or procured, a tracing of it has to be gummed on to the wood to be used,

and the work proceeded with in the same manner as in the first trial, the only difference being the requisition of more tools for the incised cuts, or, as it is technically termed, the "setting in."

On the scroll should be carved, in raised letters, a motto, name, or the word "letters," according to the purposes for which the panel is intended. This lettering is done the last thing, after the scroll has been carved and made quite smooth. It is of great importance that no glass-paper should on any account be used until all the carving is done, or it will take the edge off the tools, and lead to considerable trouble in getting them again to work well. As some of the instruments are very difficult to sharpen, great care should therefore be taken to keep them in order.

On Perforated Carving and Fret-Cutting with the Buhl-Saw.

Buhl-work, so called from the name of its inventor, had been carried to a great perfection long before the ingenious machines, which are now often used, were designed; and it may be encouraging to those amateurs who are about to handle the buhl-saw to know that they have exactly the same means of production as had the original inventor, whose works are now so rare, so delicate, and so costly.

There is a large number of ladies who use the buhl-saw very skilfully; but I feel certain that when they see the vast improvement to their works which they can give by employing carving tools, they will add to their other accomplishments that of enriching their productions with an artistic use of our implements.

Fretwork is produced in the following manner: A

horse, which is a piece of wood cut out in the form of a boot-jack, with a screw to fasten it on the table, the two prongs projecting over the front; the wood to be worked is laid on this horse (the pattern having been previously marked on it), and the saw worked in a perpendicular manner, the right hand grasping the handle underneath the horse, and working up and down between the two prongs, the left hand being laid on the fretwork to guide it according to the lines to be sawn. When the outside is done, holes must be bored with a gimlet, square awl, or an Archimedean screw in the places to be taken out of the interior, and the saw loosened at the top, put through the hole, and refastened, and so on, till all the pieces to come out of the centre are fretted. The first example I give will look very pretty (Plate IV.), even if no carving is added; the second it is more necessary to enrich with the tools, and when worked forms a pretty bookstand and portrait-frame in one (Plate V.). The wood for the former should be from a quarter to half an inch in thickness, and the latter from half an inch to five-eighths of an inch. The mode of procedure is as follows: Firstly, the design must be enlarged to the size required (say about 18 inches by 12). The outline and the pieces to come out of the centre must now be sawn out in the way described above. When that is done, the perforated wood is secured to the work-table by a piece of wood three or four inches long being fixed to the carver's screw, as if it were going to be carved; the nut end is then put through one of the holes in the work, then through the hole in the bench, and the nut screwed on underneath. The piece of wood thus employed is called a bridge, the use of which prevents the necessity of making a screw-hole in the work in hand. But this can

only be done in perforated carving. We have in this class of work no "grounding" to do. The description in a former section will give an insight into the manner of finishing the work, and producing a natural effect.

On Bold Carving, and Carving in the Round or Solid.

This is the most difficult and the most important branch of wood-carving or sculpture; and, in fact, I think it is the only class of carving that merits the latter term. It occupies more time in execution, and requires considerably more practice and more taste.

Let us for a moment look at a piece of Grinling Gibbons's carving. It is probably an arrangement of bouquets of fruit and flowers tied together with graceful folds of ribbon, which, with festoons of flowers branching out of cornucopia, form the bordering of a handsome mirror. This is sure to be bold and daring work, producing a grand effect. The carving has probably in some parts a projection of eight or ten inches, so arranged that, though the masses are to a certain extent uniform, yet they appear to have become so by accident. Now this is not, as some would think, executed in the solid, but probably in three, certainly in two, layers of wood, carved separately and mounted one on another in such a dexterous manner that the junction is quite unobservable. Nearly all the works of this eminent carver are mounted in this manner; and if the amateur wishes to carry out any works in this style he will certainly receive pleasure, emulation, and instruction by studying the works of Grinling Gibbons at any of the palaces, mansions, or churches which are fortunate enough to possess some of his handiwork.

We had better commence by carving one of the smaller mounts,—say, for instance, a branch of an apple-tree, with

leaves and fruit, about two inches or two inches and a half in thickness. To study directly from nature is undoubtedly the safest way of representing her correctly; it is, nevertheless, attended with considerable difficulty in this and many other instances to an unpractised amateur. I should, therefore, advise the pupil to copy a carved mount before he attempts the light, airy, and graceful designs of nature herself; for the experienced carver will translate, as it were, the natural object to the amateur by his judgment without losing its characteristics, but merely arranging it in such a manner as will make it possible to render its representation in wood practicable and effective. In fact, it is sometimes necessary to exaggerate forms to counterbalance the want of colour in our material.

This study must be sawn out with a bow-saw to the outline, the wood being held in the vice (the buhl-saw is far too delicate for wood of such thickness). The bosting must now be commenced, regard being paid to advice in a former section, and carrying it out in such a way that the thickness of wood is made good use of without showing the sides too obtrusively.

This will form a good piece of practice for doing something on rather a grand scale, and those who have succeeded with it sufficiently well to encourage them to proceed in this direction, might now attempt a floral boss in the style of Grinling Gibbons. The branch of apple-tree which we have just finished will form the mount. The place on which it is to be fitted is called a seat. The ground part of this work should be carved all over, showing little or no wood unused, as explained by Plate VII. The seat should be a circular pedestal, about one inch and a quarter in diameter, left to the full thickness of the wood, in the place just underneath the mount. The sides should

be carved, to give as good an appearance as the design will allow. When finished I should advise it to be varnished and white polished. It could be made use of for many purposes, as, for instance, a bracket, in which case a top for it should be turned in walnut wood, and polished in the same manner. This will be found to give a pleasant contrast.

In carving bold works such as the above, it is very useful to have some clay or modelling wax, and, before cutting the wood, to model the design with modelling tools. By this means the amateur will be better able to determine the best way to lay down the leaves and flowers.

I hope and think I have given such hints in the various branches of the art, and shown their peculiar treatment, as will enable the amateur to carry out any works he may wish, provided the requisite practice is given; and I also hope that, with my hints and their patience, many beautiful works of art may be added to their treasures.

On Sharpening the Tools and keeping them in Order, and Other Information.

When carving tools are first purchased they have generally neither been ground nor sharpened, unless specially ordered, or bought of a carver, in which cases they will be ready for use. It is nevertheless useful for the amateur to be independent, and to know how to grind, sharpen, and set his tools himself.

Nearly every tool requires a separate and different treatment to sharpen, as their points or blades differ materially.

Firstly, then, they must all be ground on a grindstone well wetted with water; thus Nos. 1, 2, and 3 are ground on their convex side, at an angle of 23 degrees, turning them slightly all the while, so as to grind them evenly. When they are brought to a nice edge others may be

taken up, as Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8; the same method applies to these, except that they will require a little more turning round, as they are more curved. No. 9 has to be ground on both sides. No. 10 must be ground on its lower side. No. 11 the same; but it requires the merest touch on the grindstone. No. 12 is the most difficult: it requires grinding on its three outer sides all exactly equal with each other. The backbend must be ground only on its concave side: I have constantly seen this mistake made by grinders.

The twelve tools now ground have to be sharpened on the oilstones in this manner: The tools are held firmly in the left hand, and the Turkey or Arkansas is rubbed on them with the right hand, the stones being wetted with sweet oil. The Arkansas stones are used for the more delicate of the instruments; the others may be rubbed with the Turkey. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are rubbed on their concave side with the round edge of the Turkey stone, and afterwards rubbed on the convex side with the flat part of the stone. No. 9 requires to be rubbed with the flat side of the Turkey stone on both sides; Nos. 10 and 11 to be rubbed with flat side of Turkey stone on the lower side only; and No. 12 to be very carefully rubbed on its three outer sides with the Arkansas stone.

The tools have now to be strapped; *i.e.* drawn over a piece of buff leather with some sharpening paste made of emery and putty-powder dust on it, similar to a razor strap. Supposing the above to have been carried out properly, the tools are now ready for use. Practice is required to know when they are sufficiently ground and ready for the oilstones.

The tools should not be allowed to knock one against another, left in the damp, or used for improper purposes,

or they will soon get out of order; but they should be kept carefully apart, and occasionally applied to the leather strap: they will then remain sharp for a considerable time. The most difficult tools to set, such as the maccaroni and parting tool, it would be well to keep in scissor sheaths. The best way to keep tools in order is to have a tray or shallow box, of wood or cardboard, with racks to prevent the instruments touching each other.

In carving frames it is safest to form the rebate first, as it is dangerous to do it after the carving is executed. The rebate is at the back of the frame, and is the groove in which the glass and picture rest. It should be done evenly all round, or the chances are that the glass will break when pressed in with the backboards.

It is always useful to have a little glue ready to your hand, as accidents will happen with the best regulated instruments. It is made thus: Break the glue up into pieces about the size of shillings, put it into the glue-pot, pour water on it so as just to cover it, half fill the outer vessel with water, and boil the whole until the glue is quite melted. There must always be water in the outer kettle, or the glue will burn. Salisbury glue is the best for amateurs to use, as its light colour will render the joints less observable. It must be used quite hot. In winter we often warm the wood, in order to prevent the glue from chilling while being used. When straight joints have to be glued, they must be made perfectly level; both pieces must be brushed over with glue, and the two pieces rubbed together with some strength, in order to press the surplus glue from out of the joint, and then put on one side to dry. When a leaf or small piece of carving is broken off, it is merely glued and pressed on, and held for a few minutes, or tied on with string, or fixed

in its place with some other means; it is only in straight joints that it is necessary to rub the two pieces of wood together. In cases where cramps can be used a stronger joint will be made, as the superfluous glue will be more effectually pressed out.

Warping is a frequent cause of annoyance to amateurs, and unless they know how to remedy it, they are often obliged to throw aside as useless the work of many days, or else, in trying to cure, increase the disease.

Warping is caused by allowing new, unseasoned wood (or, as it is technically termed, "green wood") to dry on one side more rapidly than the reverse side. It should be turned often to avoid this, and should not be used until it is well seasoned. It is also caused by exposing wood to heat or to damp, in which case it is almost sure to curl and shrink.

The way to remedy this is very simple, but requires careful watching. The concave side of the warped wood is to be placed over a damp towel or cloth, and some weight, not heavy enough to break the wood, laid on it; or the convex side may be subjected to some warmth—placed, perhaps, three feet from an ordinary fire. In either of these methods a careful watch must be kept, or the wood may be overshot—that is, drawn too far—and take a warp in the opposite direction.

On Staining, Oiling, Varnishing, and Polishing Wood-Carving.

Amateurs generally content themselves by merely executing the carving or art part of their works, and having them fitted up and finished by professional hands; but there are some who are so far independent as to like to carry out their designs entirely themselves from their commencement to the finish. I think it will therefore

not be out of character with the objects of this little work to give some advice relating to staining, varnishing, and polishing wood-carvings.

Walnut stain (made without oil) is in very general use for lime and other light woods; it can be diluted with water to any tint required, and should be put on the carving with a brush or small camel-hair pencil. This should be commenced and finished without leaving off, and the same place should not be gone over twice if possible, or the result will be that lines or streaks will appear, or that one place will be of a darker shade than the rest. When diluted, it is best to try it on a waste piece of wood before using it on the carving, to test the strength of the stain, and also to dilute sufficient for the work in hand at first. This stain is used also for giving a deeper shade to light walnut wood; but this wood is generally of so rich a colour as not to require it.

Bichromate of potash is in great use for staining oak and other woods of that character, but it does not do well for softer woods. It can (like the former) be diluted with water, and applied in the same manner, only it should not be allowed to stain the hands, as it is very difficult to get off.

Boxwood requires another process altogether. It has to be washed quickly over with the strongest aqua-fortis that can be had, and when it is of a rich colour, rather darker than required, it should be plunged into a basin of cold water to stop the action. This operation should not take many minutes. When dry, brush it over with a stiff brush.

When oak or walnut wood is not required to be stained, and the plain material gives it an unfinished appearance, oiling with linseed oil produces a good effect. It takes two or three days to dry thoroughly, when it should

be rubbed over with a stiff bristle brush, if the carving is strong enough to allow of its being applied freely.

There are very numerous varnishes in use, but the most useful for the purposes of amateur wood-carvers are white hard varnish, brown hard varnish, and pale hard varnish. The former is used for light woods, the second for dark woods, and the last for medium-tinted woods. The varnishes are to be applied with camel-hair brushes as smoothly as possible, as if the work were being delicately painted all over, not as though it were being washed. It must also be laid on as thinly as can be, and two or three coats will be required, as the first will sink into the grain of the wood, time being allowed for drying between each coat. It is best to pour out a small quantity (a table-spoonful or so) into a glass or cup, so as not to use it from the bottle, which should be kept closed. The varnish not used can be returned to the bottle, and the brush washed in spirits of wine, and kept for this purpose. If the varnish looks somewhat rough, as it probably will do, it can be smoothed down with a little polish, or after the second coat of varnish the work may be lightly glass-papered once more. No. 0 paper which has been rather worn out is the best for this purpose.

Polishing is not the pleasantest occupation, but as it adds considerably to the effect of certain works, probably some of my readers may like to know the process. White or transparent polish is used for light and (though it may seem odd) for black woods, and French polish for brown woods.

The *modus operandi* is as follows. Take a small piece of wadding, soft and pliable, and pour a few drops of either polish upon it according to the colour of the wood. Now wrap the wetted wadding up in a piece of old linen, forming it into a pad; hold the pad by the surplus linen;

touch the pad with one or two drops of linseed oil. Now pass the pad gently over the parts to be polished, working it round in small circles, occasionally re-wetting the wadding with polish, and the pad with a drop or so of oil. The object of the oil is merely to cause the pad to run over the wood easily without sticking, therefore as little as possible should be used, as it tends to deaden the polish to a certain extent. Where a carving is to be polished after having been varnished, the same process is necessary, but it can only be applied to the plainer portions of the work. Plane surfaces must be made perfectly smooth with glass-paper before polishing, as every scratch or mark will show twice as badly after the operation. When the polish is first rubbed on the wood it is called the "bodying-in;" it will sink into the wood, and not give much glaze. It must, when dry, have another body rubbed on, and a third generally finishes it; but if not, the operations must be repeated. Just before the task is completed greasy smears will show themselves: these will disappear by continuing the gentle rubbing without oiling the pad. You should now be able to see your face in the wood.

In conclusion I may add, that as I am devoted to the pursuit, I am always ready to give the best advice to any who may be about to commence the practice of wood-carving.

I now beg to take my leave, with the best wishes for the success of those to whom I have had the honour of presenting some "Practical Hints."

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PLATE II.

IVY PAPER-WEIGHT.

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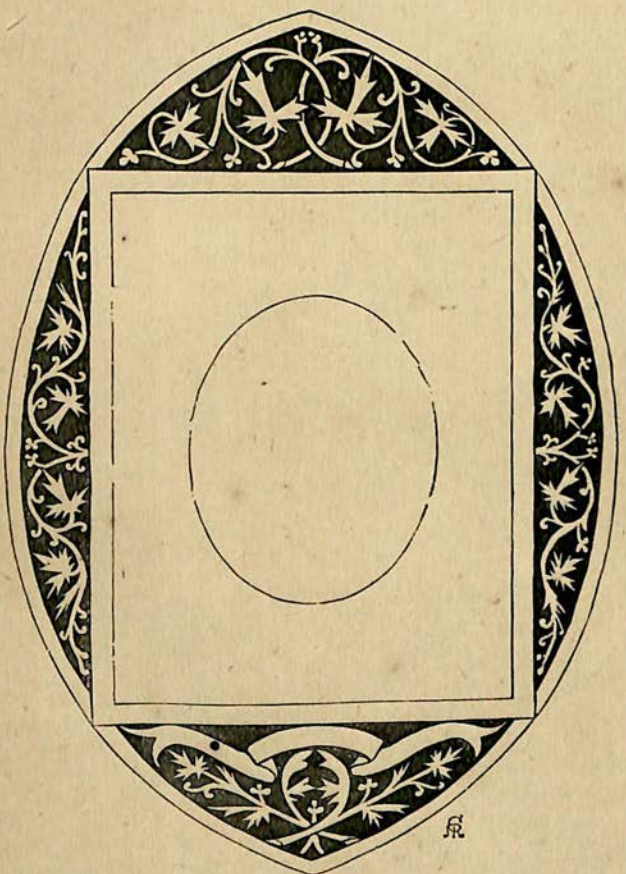
PLATE III.

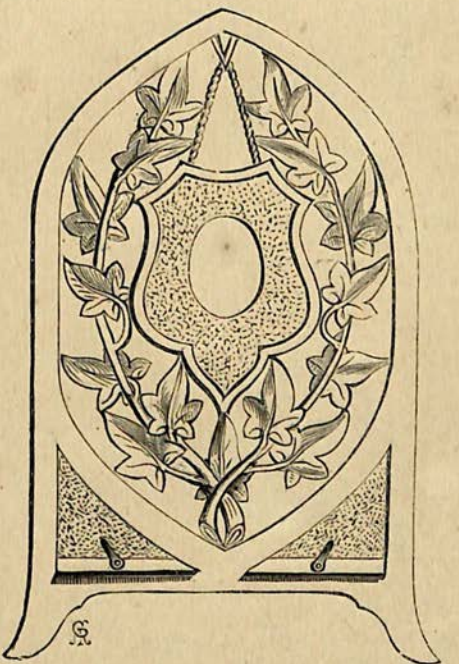
PANEL FOR MOTTO OR INSCRIPTION.

PLATE IV.



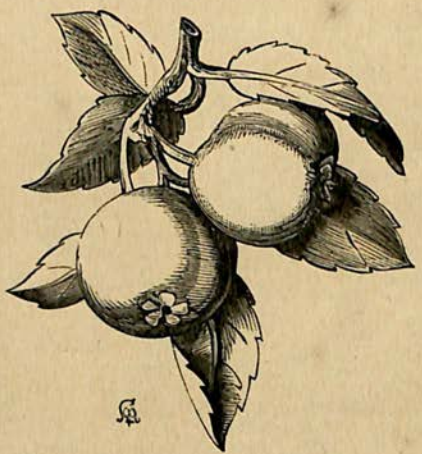
FRAME FOR FRET-CUTTING AND CARVING.

PLATE V.



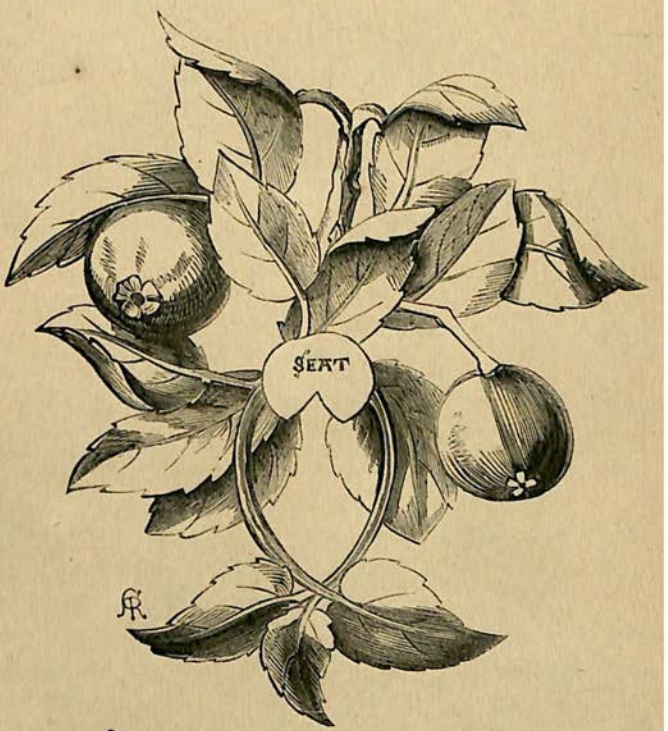
BOOK-STAND AND PORTRAIT-FRAME IN ONE.

PLATE VI.



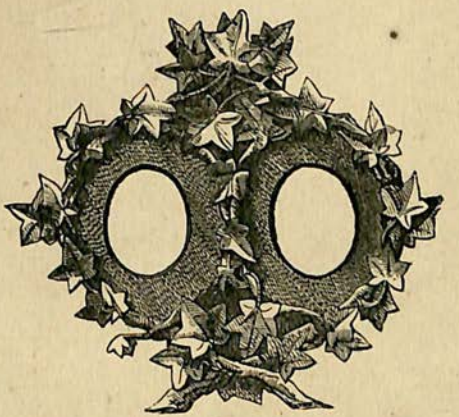
BRANCH OF APPLE-TREE, FOR CARVING IN THE ROUND.

PLATE VII.



GROUND CARVING FOR MOUNT, ENGRAVED ON PLATE VI.

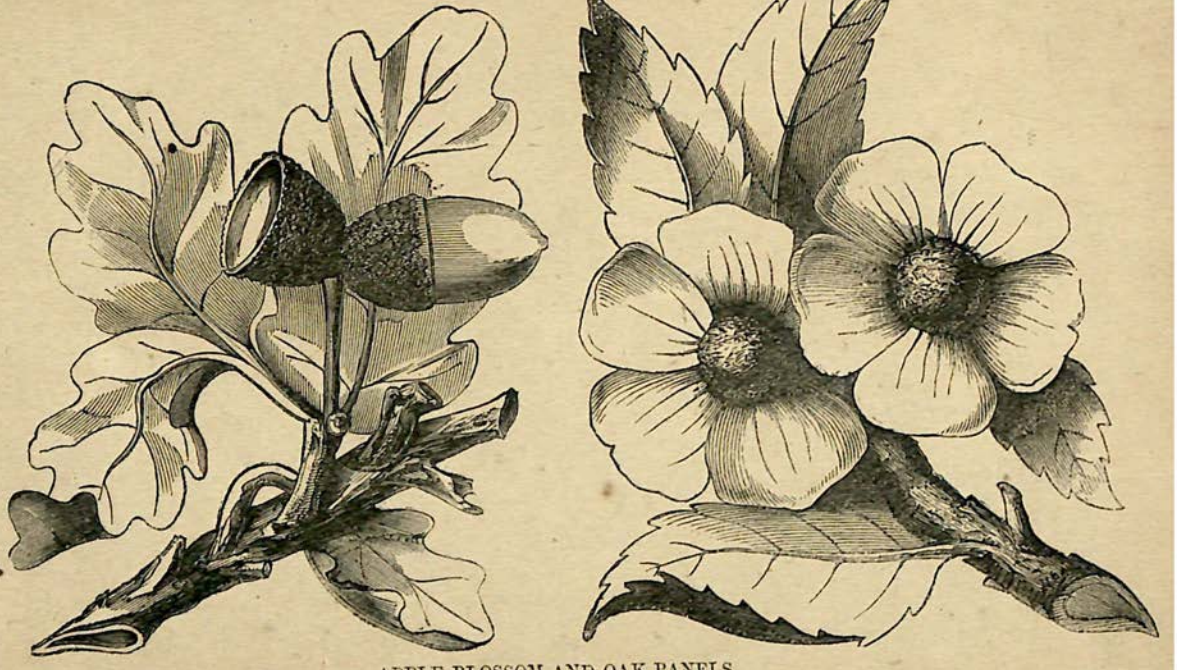
PLATE VIII.



IVY-FRAME FOR TWO PORTRAITS.

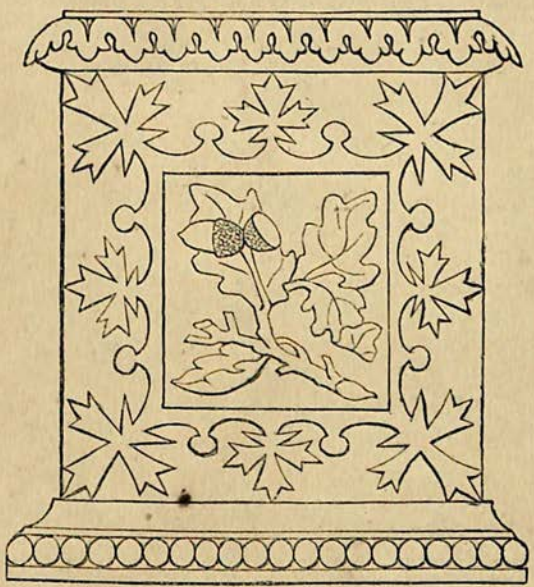
BRACKET IN THE STYLE OF GRINLING GIBBONS.

PLATE IX.



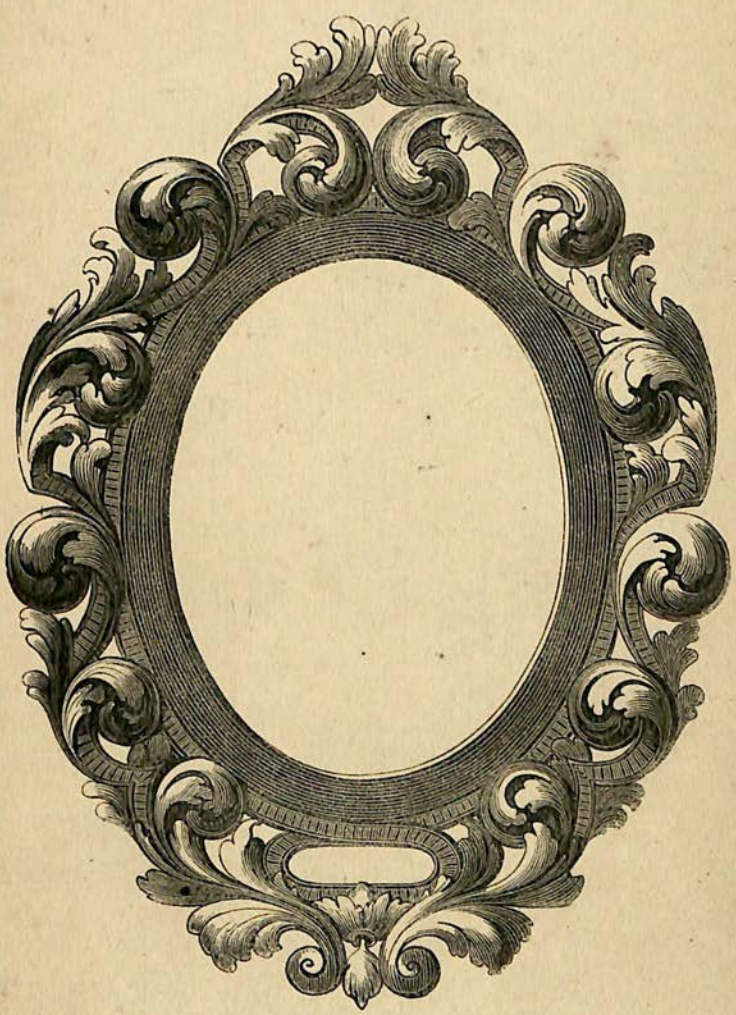
APPLE-BLOSSOM AND OAK PANELS.

PLATE X.



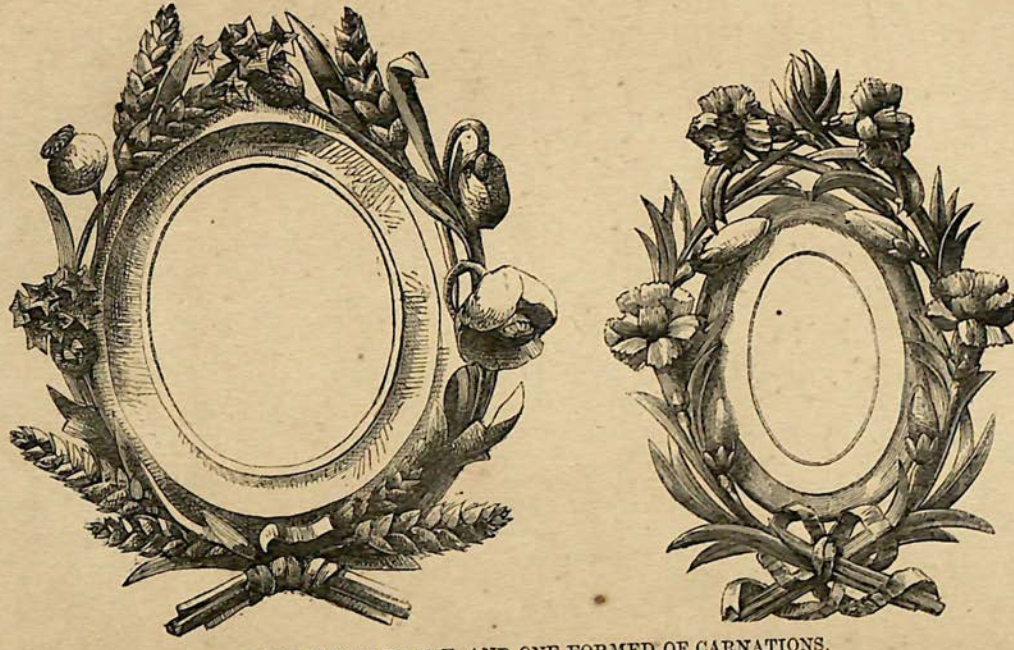
FLOWER-BOX, SHOWING HOW THE TWO PRECEDING PANELS CAN BE USED.

PLATE XI.



PORTRAIT FRAME OF SCROLL WORK.
This can be worked at almost any size.

PLATE XII.

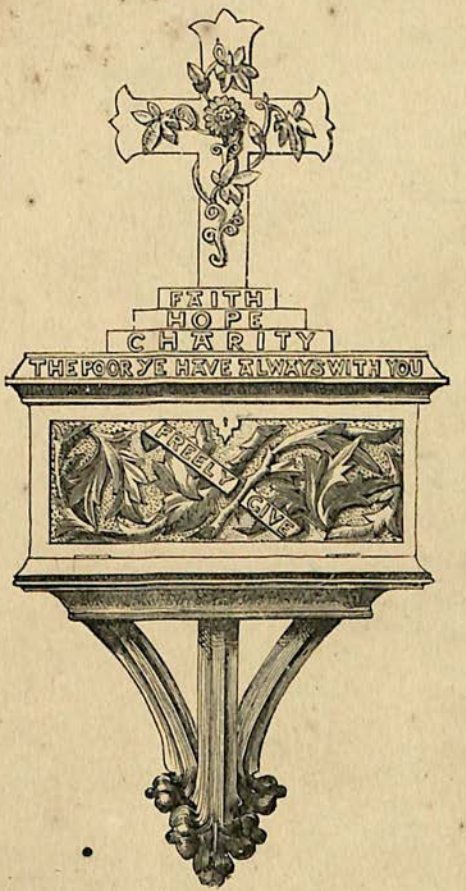


CORN AND POPPY FRAME, AND ONE FORMED OF CARNATIONS.

PLATE XIII.

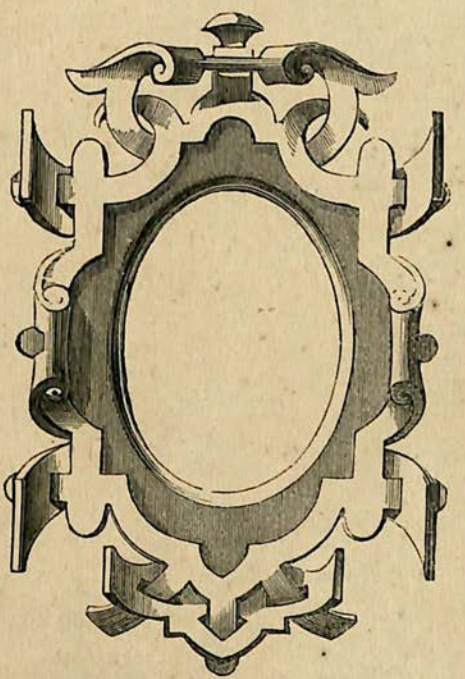
IVY PANEL FOR CABINET, ONE OF MANY ORIGINALLY DESIGNED FOR THE DECORATION OF THE "BESSEMER" STEAM-SHIP.

PLATE XIV.



ALMSBOX, SIMILAR TO THOSE CARVED FOR ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, CORNHILL.

PLATE XV.

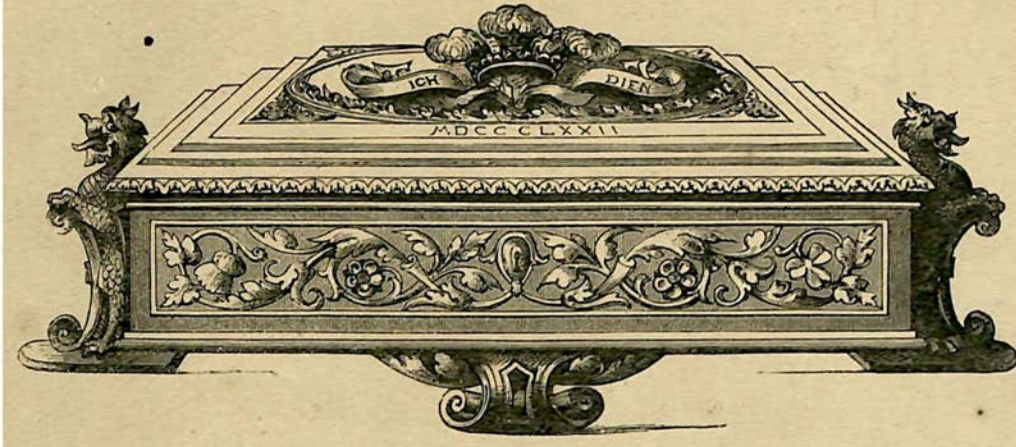


ELIZABETHAN FRAME.

PLATE XVI.

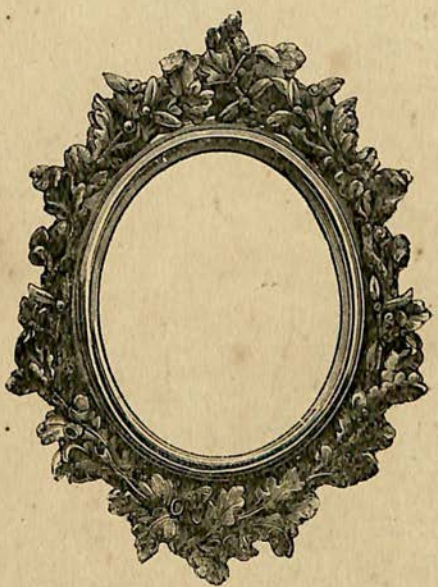
TRIPLICH OR RELIQUARY.

PLATE XVII.



CASKET CARVED BY G. A. ROGERS, PRESENTED BY THE CITY OF LONDON TO H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES ON HIS RECOVERY FROM HIS MEMORABLE ILLNESS.

PLATE XVIII.

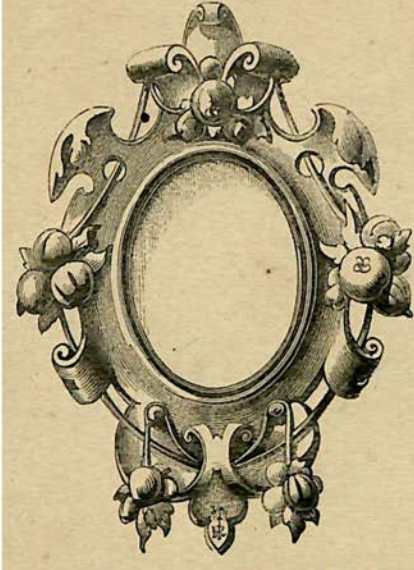


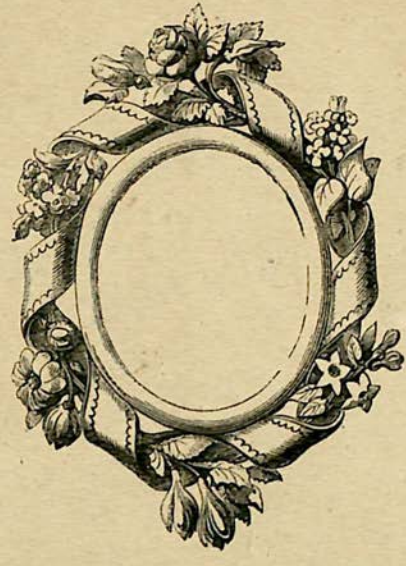
OAK AND MISLETOE FRAME.

PLATE XIX.

BRACKET FORMED OF ACANTHUS LEAVES.

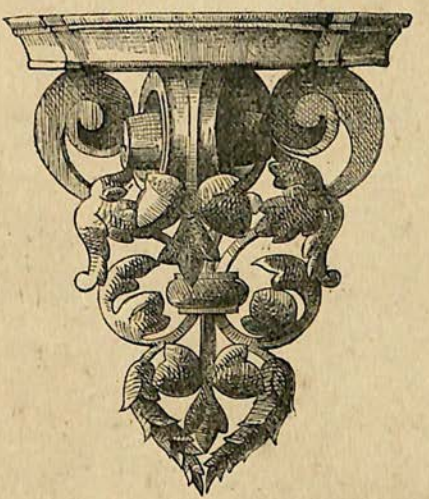
PLATE XX.





1. FRAME FOR MINIATURE, ONE OF THE PERIOD OF JAMES I.—2. FLORAL, ENTWINED IN A RIBBON.

PLATE XXI.



RENAISSANCE BRACKET.

PLATE XXII.

HERON BRACKET.

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